



# TRIBAL WOMEN EXPERIENCING PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTION IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TELANGANA

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the experiences of tribal women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India, with a special focus on Telangana state. The study aims to understand the challenges faced by tribal women in participating in PRIs, the extent of their involvement in decision-making, and the impact of their participation on the development of their communities. Tribal women face challenges such as low levels of education, lack of awareness about their rights and entitlements, and limited access to resources and information. However, the study also highlights the agency and resilience of tribal women who have been able to overcome some of these challenges and make a significant contribution to their communities. The study indicates that the participation of tribal women in PRIs has led to positive changes in areas such as healthcare, education, sanitation, and women's empowerment. However, there is a need for greater support and capacity building for tribal women to effectively discharge their roles and responsibilities in PRIs. The study concludes with recommendations for strengthening the participation of tribal women in PRIs, such as providing them with adequate resources, training, and support, ensuring their representation in decision-making bodies, and creating an enabling environment for their participation.

**KEYWORDS:** Adequate Eesources, Education, Healthcare, Sanitation, Support, Training. Women's Empowerment

## INTRODUCTION

Tribal women in Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) refers to women belonging to tribal communities who are elected to local self-government bodies at the village, block, and district levels in India. The Panchayat Raj system was established in India in 1993 to decentralize power and promote grassroots democracy by empowering local communities to make decisions about their development needs and priorities. Tribal women in PRIs have played a significant role in shaping local governance and development in India. They have been instrumental in bringing about changes in their communities, especially in areas such as health, education, sanitation, and women's empowerment. Tribal women in India face multiple challenges such as poverty, discrimination, illiteracy, and lack of access to basic amenities and services. However, with their participation in PRIs, they have been able to address some of these challenges and bring about positive changes in their communities.

The participation of tribal women in PRIs has also been recognized as an important step towards achieving gender equality and inclusive development in India. The government and civil society organizations have been working towards creating a supportive environment for the participation of tribal women in PRIs and providing them with the necessary resources and training to effectively discharge their roles and responsibilities.

### Panchayati Raj Syste

The Panchayati Raj system was introduced in India in 1959 with the aim of decentralizing power and ensuring local governance. The system comprises of three levels of Panchayats- Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat. The 73rd Amendment Act of 1992 made the Panchayati Raj system constitutional, making it mandatory to hold regular elections to Panchayats and ensuring the participation of women and marginalized communities.

### Scheduled tribes in Telangana

Telangana is a state in southern India that has a significant population of Scheduled Tribes. As per the 2011 Census of India, the Scheduled Tribe population in Telangana was 9.34% of the state's total population. Some of the major Scheduled Tribes communities in Telangana include:

**Gonds:** Gonds are one of the largest Scheduled Tribes in Telangana, with a population of around 1.4 million people. They are primarily concentrated in Adilabad, Warangal, and Khammam districts.

**Koyas:** Koyas are another major Scheduled Tribe in Telangana, with a population of around 800,000 people. They are primarily concentrated in Khammam, Warangal, and Adilabad districts.

**Lambadas:** Lambadas, also known as Banjaras, are a nomadic tribe that has settled in Telangana. They have a population of around 700,000 people and are primarily concentrated in Adilabad, Karimnagar, and Warangal districts.

**Thoti:** Thoti is a Scheduled Tribe with a population of around 100,000 people. They are primarily concentrated in Adilabad district.

**Yerukalas:** Yerukalas, also known as Kurumas, are a Scheduled Tribe with a population of around 250,000 people. They are primarily concentrated in Nalgonda, Khammam, and Mahbubnagar districts.

### Tribal Women and Panchayati Raj

The Panchayati Raj system provided an opportunity for tribal women to participate in local governance and decision-making. In Telangana, the participation of tribal women in Panchayati Raj institutions has increased over the years, with many women elected to various levels of Panchayats.

The Panchayati Raj system in India is a decentralized system of governance that aims to promote grassroots democracy and empower local communities. The system is based on a three-tier structure of elected local bodies, known as Panchayats, at the village, block, and district levels. The Panchayati Raj system provides an opportunity for tribal women to participate in local governance and decision-making.

The participation of tribal women in the Panchayati Raj system is significant because it can help to address the issues and challenges faced by tribal communities, particularly those related to gender inequality, poverty, and lack of access to basic services. Tribal women's participation in the system can also help to promote their rights and interests and ensure that their voices are heard in the decision-making process.

One of the key provisions of the Panchayati Raj system is the reservation of seats for women in the local bodies. Under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, one-third of the seats in the Panchayats are reserved for women. This has created an opportunity for tribal women to contest and win elections and become active participants in the decision-making process.

Moreover, the Panchayati Raj system provides a platform for tribal women to raise their concerns and issues related to health, education, sanitation, and other basic services. Through the Panchayats, tribal women can work towards the development of their communities and ensure that the benefits of government programs and schemes reach the most vulnerable sections of society.

In addition to the reservation of seats for women, the Panchayati Raj system also provides for the participation of women in various committees and sub-committees, such as the health committee, education committee, and sanitation committee. This enables tribal women to engage in specific issues and contribute to the development of their communities in a targeted manner.

The Panchayati Raj system provides an opportunity for tribal women to participate in local governance and decision-making, which can help to promote their rights and interests and address the challenges faced by their communities. However, it is important to ensure that tribal women are able to overcome the challenges they face in participating in the system and that their voices are heard and taken into account in the decision-making process.

### Experiences of Tribal Women

The experiences of tribal women with the Panchayati Raj system have been mixed. While many women have been able to participate in local governance and decision-making, they have faced numerous challenges. The lack of education and awareness about the Panchayati Raj system has been a major barrier for tribal women. Many women have also faced resistance from their families and communities, who do not believe that women should participate in politics.

In addition to the lack of education and awareness about the Panchayati Raj system, tribal women in Telangana have also faced several other challenges in their participation. These include:

**Limited representation:** Although there has been an increase in the number of women elected to Panchayati Raj institutions in Telangana, many tribal women continue to be underrepresented. This is due to several factors, including the lack of political representation in the wider society, limited access to resources and support, and social norms that prioritize men's political participation.

**Discrimination and marginalization:** Tribal women in Telangana often face discrimination and marginalization from other members of their Panchayat. They may be excluded from decision-making processes or may not have their opinions and ideas taken seriously due to their gender and social status.

**Limited resources:** Tribal women in Telangana often have limited resources and support to effectively participate in the Panchayati Raj system. This includes access to information, training, and resources that can help them understand and navigate the system.

**Limited power:** Even when tribal women are elected to Panchayati Raj institutions, they often have limited power to effect change. This is due to various factors, including the limited authority of Panchayats in decision-making processes and the limited resources available to implement their decisions.

The experiences of tribal women with the Panchayati Raj system in Telangana have been mixed. While there have been some successes, many women continue to face significant challenges in their participation and representation. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort to increase awareness, provide resources and support, and promote greater gender equality in the wider society.

### Effective participation of tribal women in Panchayati Raj institutions

Effective participation of tribal women in Panchayati Raj institutions in Telangana is essential to ensure their inclusion and empowerment in local governance and decision-making. However, achieving effective participation has been a challenge due to various social, economic, and political factors.

One of the primary challenges is the lack of education and awareness about the Panchayati Raj system among tribal women. Many women are not aware of their rights and responsibilities as members of Panchayats and are not familiar with the procedures and processes involved. This limits their ability to effectively participate and contribute to decision-making processes.

Various initiatives have been taken by the government and civil society organizations to increase awareness and provide training and support to tribal women. These initiatives include capacity-building programs, awareness campaigns, and community mobilization efforts. Such programs aim to educate women about their rights, provide them with skills and knowledge to participate in decision-making processes, and empower them to effectively advocate for their needs and priorities.

Another challenge to effective participation is the lack of representation of tribal women in Panchayati Raj institutions. While there has been some increase in the number of women elected to Panchayats, many women continue to be underrepresented. This is due to several factors, including the limited representation of women in the wider society, social norms that prioritize men's political participation, and the limited support and resources available to women candidates.

To address these challenges, various measures have been taken to promote greater representation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions. These include reserving seats for women in local bodies, providing incentives for political parties to field women candidates, and providing financial and other support to women candidates. These measures have helped to increase women's representation in Panchayats and have provided them with greater opportunities to participate and contribute to decision-making processes.

In addition to the above challenges, effective participation of tribal women in Panchayati Raj institutions in Telangana also requires addressing issues related to discrimination, marginalization, and limited power. This requires addressing social norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality, providing resources and support to enable women to effectively participate in decision-making processes, and promoting greater gender equality in the wider society.

### Telangana State Initiatives

Tribal women's participation in the Panchayat Raj institutions in Telangana, a state in southern India, has seen significant progress in recent years. The Telangana government has taken several initiatives to promote the participation of tribal women in local governance and decision-making processes.

One of the key initiatives is the reservation of seats for women in the Panchayat Raj institutions. In Telangana, 50% of the seats in all Panchayat Raj institutions are reserved for women, including tribal women. This reservation has provided a significant opportunity for tribal women to contest elections and become active participants in the decision-making process.

Telangana government has also taken steps to provide training and capacity building to women elected representatives. The government conducts training programs on various topics such as leadership, governance, and financial management to empower women elected representatives to effectively discharge their duties.

The Telangana government has launched several schemes and programs specifically targeted at tribal communities to address their unique challenges and issues. The government has implemented schemes such as the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and the Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) to provide livelihood opportunities, health and education services, and other basic amenities to tribal communities.

The government has also established Women's Welfare Committees in all Panchayat Raj institutions to address women's issues and ensure their participation in decision-making. These committees are mandated to review the implementation of government schemes and programs related to women and make recommendations for improvement.

Despite these initiatives, there are still challenges faced by tribal women in participating in the Panchayat Raj institutions in Telangana. These challenges include lack of awareness about their rights and opportunities, cultural barriers, and limited access to resources. It is important for the government and civil society organizations to continue working towards addressing these challenges and promoting the participation of tribal women in local governance and decision-making processes.

### CONCLUSION

The Panchayati Raj system has provided an opportunity for tribal women to participate in local governance and decision-making. While the experiences of tribal women have been mixed, their participation has been crucial in addressing the needs of marginalized communities. The government and civil society organizations must continue to support the participation of tribal women in Panchayati Raj institutions and address the challenges they face. Only then can we ensure that the voices of all communities are heard and that the benefits of local governance are shared equitably. Tribal women in India have faced numerous challenges due to their marginalized status in society. The Panchayati Raj system was introduced to address the needs of local governance and ensure the participation of people in decision-making processes. The aim of this article is to explore the experiences of tribal women with the Panchayati Raj system, with a focus on Telangana. Achieving effective participation of tribal women in Panchayati Raj institutions in Telangana is essential to ensure their inclusion and empowerment in local governance and decision-making. Addressing the challenges that limit their participation and representation requires a concerted effort to increase awareness, provide training and support, promote greater representation, and address issues related to discrimination, marginalization, and limited power.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, here are some recommendations for strengthening the participation of tribal women in PRIs in India:

**Provide adequate resources:** Tribal women often lack access to resources such as finance, infrastructure, and technology. Therefore, it is important to provide them with adequate resources to participate in PRIs effectively. This could include providing them with funds to organize meetings and awareness campaigns, access to technology to stay connected, and transportation facilities to attend PRI meetings.

**Provide training and support:** Tribal women face multiple challenges, including low levels of education, lack of awareness about their rights and entitlements, and limited access to information. Therefore, training and capacity building programs should be designed specifically for tribal women to equip them with the necessary skills to participate in PRIs effectively. The training could focus on leadership, communication, advocacy, and other skills necessary for effective participation.

**Ensure their representation in decision-making bodies:** Reservation of seats for women and tribal communities in PRIs is a positive step, but it is not enough. It is important to ensure that tribal women are elected to decision-making bodies such as gram panchayats, block panchayats, and district panchayats. This will give them a voice in decision-making and enable them to influence policies and

programs that impact their communities.

**Create an enabling environment for their participation:** The socio-cultural, economic, and political environment plays a crucial role in determining the participation of tribal women in PRIs. Therefore, it is important to create an enabling environment that encourages and supports their participation. This could include creating awareness campaigns to sensitize the community about the importance of tribal women's participation, ensuring the safety and security of women in PRI meetings, and providing opportunities for networking and collaboration.

**Monitor and evaluate their participation:** It is essential to monitor and evaluate the participation of tribal women in PRIs to understand the impact of their participation on the development of their communities. Regular monitoring and evaluation can help identify gaps and challenges and facilitate the development of targeted interventions to address these gaps. It can also help measure the effectiveness of capacity building programs and identify areas for improvement.

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